The Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers
L'Association canadienne des professeurs de langues secondes
CASLT/ACPLS

ESL Students Are More Motivated to Learn French

Ottawa, Ontario, October 24, 2005 – English as a second language (ESL) students have more interest in studying French than English-speaking students. This finding comes out of a recent study of secondary school Core French students.

"It was the students with the least exposure to French outside of the class who were the most motivated. Although they had not had the same opportunities to meet Francophones, they remained more motivated to study French," states Callie Mady, a Core French teacher who is completing her PhD in Education at the University of Toronto's Ontario Institute of Studies in Education.

Mady points to a number of factors that affect ESL student motivations to learn French, including the fact that they enthusiastically pursue integration into Canada, which ideally includes English-French bilingualism. This is coupled with a strong motivation to become fully Canadian.

Mady, together with the Canadian Association for Second Language Teachers (CASLT), would like to see a greater effort made to provide ESL students with equal access to Core French programs. At present, there are no federal or provincial policies that explicitly ensure this access for ESL students. Based on seemingly common perceptions, teachers and administrators often arrange timetables for ESL beginners exempting them from Core French instruction.

According to Mady, "Canadian studies that examine ESL students studying French confirm that bilingual students have some advantages in learning a third language as compared to their unilingual counterparts. The greatest challenge for educators and parents is keeping students motivated if they find French difficult and, supporting students who are insecure about using their French skills in and outside of the classroom".

"Canada's growing multilingualism, where 24 percent of Canadians speak neither French, nor English as a first language, coupled with Canada's official bilingual English/French status, highlight a pressing need to examine the inclusion of ESL students in Core French," states Carolyn King, CASLT President.

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